

*Testimony for Public Hearing  
Human Services Committee  
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H.B. No. 5249: An Act Establishing The Connecticut Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and members of the Human Services Committee:

- My name is Mike Castillo. I am here before you today to discuss the important role of the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board within our great state. In our society of rapid medical and technological advances, the Brain is the final frontier of the medical world. No other part of our bodies remains such a mystery to the vast medical profession. Sadly, this comes at the expense of our fellow citizens. Traumatic brain injuries or TBIs, as you are all aware can and DO happen to anyone at any time. For example, any of us could even be hit by a sheet of ice falling off of our rooftops while closing the front door and sustain a brain injury. So why aren't we doing more?
- Based on the data that has been published, we know that there are approximately **93,000** CT residents living with a TBI, many of whom do not receive any services, or the right level of services, to meet their needs. Why do we allow this to happen in our great state?
- Granted there are programs in the state to address some of the complications of TBIs but these programs fall short of the answers we need to put this issue behind us for good. The system of care is flawed. It is incredibly difficult to navigate because it requires access to multiple organizations both public and private. When a loved one suffers from a TBI, it is hard enough to cope with the injury, the fear, the loss, the long hours waiting in hospitals for any sign of encouragement, the last thing people consider is the labyrinth they must navigate through in order to understand HOW to get help and WHERE to go for it.
- Adding to the problem is the fact that our best doctors and scientists are only just beginning to understand the true healing potential of the brain. Let's fix this system.
- CT stands on the forefront of one the greatest areas of intellectual and financial investment with brain science. CT can be the leader in brain science and TBI research. Lets answer the mysteries of the brain right here in CT. CT should be the centerpiece attracting the greatest minds in the world to tackle this problem. We can create the network from doctors to care providers that will maximize the treatment of our citizens and loved ones while simultaneously providing economic opportunities unmatched by any other state. With the impact of TBIs on our military, our athletes and even our government leaders, this is an issue that is understood by the public. CT can lead the way on this issue.

- This is why establishing of the TBI Advisory Board to report directly to the governor is so critical. The TBI Board is the best suited to council the executive on the areas of TBI impact. With representatives of each state agency, and contact with doctors, providers, TBI survivors and their families, the TBI Advisory Board is perfectly suited to be the liaison between the public and the state.
- The TBI Advisory Board strives to promote the creation, collaboration and coordination of accessible support, programs and services for people with TBI's and their families.
- The Board works for
  - The establishment of excellent support and services for people with TBIs in CT to enhance their quality of life.
  - The elimination of disparities in brain injury services.
  - The establishment of a coordinated and integrated service system among public and private agencies.
- The existing services and programs designed for people with TBIs are located within diverse agencies and organizations. They lack a central point for coordination, planning, and monitoring.
- The TBI Advisory Board seeks to guide and advise the State in developing a comprehensive system of services by becoming the inter-departmental, agency, planning and advisory body for the State to ensure that agency programs and services for people with TBIs address their needs properly.
- CT Should be the leader in brain research and TBI rehabilitation. By establishing the TBI Advisory Board to report to the Governor's office in combination with efforts to promote both brain research and a coordinated network of treatment facilities for those with brain injuries, CT will become the world leader in TBI recovery. Together we can travel to the final frontier, answer the mysteries of the brain, and benefit us all.

Thank you for your time and for supporting H.B 5249.

Sincerely,

Mike Castillo